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ABSTRACT

Certain categories of grammatical errors made by 42 teacher trainees at Lund University in Sweden are described and explained. Each student was asked to write two summaries in English, one an account of a book that appeared on a list of books for extensive reading and the other an account of a 40-minute tape recording in the language laboratory, "A Bear Called Paddington." The two exercises tested reading comprehension and listening comprehension, respectively. The errors were corrected, and a typology of the grammatical errors was established. Native speakers of English were then asked to evaluate the errors according to a four-point scale: (1) "uncertain," (2) "acceptable in colloquial and careless language," (3) "wrong but comprehensible," and (4) "wrong and incomprehensible." The categories of errors were as follows: (1) verb phrase, (2) noun phrase, (3) prepositions, (4) concord, (5) pronouns, (6) word order, (7) clause connection, (8) adjectives and adverbs, (9) complementation, and (10) numerals. The majority of errors were committed in the areas of verb phrase, noun phrase, prepositions, and concord. (CFM)

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SWEDISH – ENGLISH CONTRASTIVE STUDIES

Report No 7

Grammatical Errors in Teacher Trainees' Written Work

by

Anna-Brita Stenström

LUND UNIVERSITY

Swedish-English Contrastive Studies

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Report No 7 1975

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CONTENTS

		Page
1	AIM, MATERIAL AND METHOD	1
1.1	Aim	1
1.2	The data of error analysis	1
1.3	Test subjects	2
1.4	Material and method	4
1.5	Native speakers' judgements	5
2	COMMENTING ON THE STATISTICAL RESULTS	6
3	EXPLAINING VERB PHRASE ERRORS	9
3.1	Verb form	9
3.1.1	Regular verbs	9
3.1.2	Irregular verbs	10
3.2	Tense, aspect and modality	11
3.2.1	Progressive [simple]	11
3.2.2	Simple [progressive]	15
3.2.3	Present [past]	16
3.2.4	Past [present]	19
3.2.5	Would	19
3.2.6	Should	21
4	EXPLAINING NOUN PHRASE ERRORS	21
4.1	Determiners	21
4.1.1	Definite [zero]	23
4.1.2	Definite [others]	25
4.1.3	Indefinite	25
4.1.4	Zero [definite/indefinite]	27
4.2	Inflected and periphrastic genitive	28
5	EXPLAINING CONCORD ERRORS	30
6	NATIVE SPEAKERS' JUDGEMENTS	35
7	CONCLUSIONS	41
	TABLES	48
	NOTES	55
	REFERENCES	56

1 AIM, MATERIAL AND METHOD

1.1 AIM

The aim of this paper is to describe and explain certain interesting categories of grammatical errors made by teacher trainees (see section 1.3).An attempt will also be made to establish error gravity by submitting the errors to native speakers for evaluation. It is hoped that the information obtained will be of importance in the further construction of teaching materials.

1.2 THE DATA OF ERROR ANALYSIS

In this study errors include all sorts of deviant utterances, i e no distinction will be made between errors and mistakes. Corder uses the term mistake for errors in performance, i e those errors of which we are immediately aware and which we are able to correct, and errors "to refer to the systematic errors of the learner from which we are able to reconstruct his knowledge of the language to date, i.e. his transitional competence" (Corder 1967:167). Apparently errors like:

Piglet had to has [have][1] a bath
you don't know where it come [comes] from
Martha and Nick comes [come]

are typical examples of mistakes in accordance with Corder's definition above. A great many errors dealt with in this study should probably be characterized as mistakes, which points to the need for further and deeper analysis of the material as well as further testing of the students in order to make them produce reliable linguistic samples.

Another important distinction is the one between overt and covert errors, overt meaning those manifested in utterances, and covert used for those errors that learners choose not to reveal by using a grammatical construction of which they are sure instead of one of which they are not sure (Corder 1973:272-273, 285). The present study deals only with overt errors.

As regards origin, errors may be divided into two large groups:

(A) Errors which are caused by interlingual interference, i e due to inappropriate use of the rules of the mother tongue in the target language (=negative transfer, Corder 1973:132), e g:

*he is officer = Sw 'han är officer'

(B) Errors which are caused by intralingual interference, i e due to inappropriate use of rules and forms in the target language itself (= overgeneralization), e g:

*Henry and his friends got hurted (overgeneralization from regular verbs)

Decisions about sources of errors are often difficult to make. Can one ever be completely sure? How does one identify redundant errors for instance, i e those which are caused by faulty materials, faulty teaching or faulty learning as opposed to errors which are normal to the learning process? And, as Corder (1973:290) points out, there may be various processes going on simultaneously, e g transfer, overgeneralization, faulty categorization, etc.

1.3 TEST SUBJECTS

The test group differed from Corder's characterization of a homogeneous group (1973:264) in at least three important respects, namely age, previous knowledge of English, and practical experience in the use of English. The students' varied school backgrounds can be seen in the following table:

	Group A	Group B	Previous studies of English No. of years
Gymnasieskola ("upper secondary school"[2])			
natural sciences division		4	10
social sciences division		6	9
economics division		1	9
liberal arts division		2	9
Fackskola ("2-year upper secondary school")		4	9
Folkhögskola ("voluntary (county) boarding school at secondary level for adults")	6	3	2-3
Realskola ("junior secondary school")	10		7
Grundskola ("9-year comprehensive school")	2		7
Flickskola ("girls' municipal school")	1		7
Kompletteringskurs ("supplementary studies"[3])	3		1
	22	20	

Group A students were granted entrance to the College according to a system requiring eight terms of English studies at the College (=the whole training period), whereas group B students followed the new rules of 1968 which require three years of teacher training but only three terms of English studies after Training college entrance. Both groups of students, 42 in all, studied to become teachers in Grades 4 to 6, and a passing grade in English is necessary for certification. The average age of group A was 27, with a variation between 21 and 39 years of age, in group B 22 but with a smaller variation than in group A. All the students in group A except

one (44) were between 19 and 26 years old. For group A the first two years at the college were supposed to lead up to the level of studentexamen (upper secondary school leaving examination). The entrance requirements for group B corresponded to the level of fackskolan (2-year upper secondary school), end of second year. The tests were taken during the last term of English for both groups.

1.4 MATERIAL AND METHOD

In May 1973 the 42 students were asked to write two summaries each. The first one, at the beginning of the month, was an account of a book that appeared on the list of books for extensive reading, and the accounts had an average length of about 300 words. Group A chose Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh (Bungay) or Barrie, Peter Pan (Harmondsworth) or Christie, Peril at End House (Motala), and group B chose Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (London) or Albee, Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf (Harmondsworth) plus Steinbeck, The Moon is Down (Bungay).

The second summary, written at the end of May and with an average length of 400 words, was an account of a 40-minute tape recording in the language laboratory of Bond, A Bear Called Paddington (Aylesbury), Chapter 1.

The summaries were to be regarded as exercises rather than tests. The time was limited to 90 minutes on both occasions, and for test number two listening time was included. The two tests will be referred to as "reading comprehension" and "listening comprehension tests", respectively.

Both accounts can be characterized as free reproductions, which means that the students were in a position to avoid many grammatical errors. As will be seen from the frequencies and types of errors, it is doubtful whether they really took advantage of the situation

or whether they concentrated so much on the contents of their accounts that they forgot to pay attention to grammar. And would they have needed more than 90 minutes to finish their tasks in a satisfactory way?

My first step was to correct the errors with the aid of the two school grammars that the students used, namely Fischerström (1962) and Slettengren-Widén (1967), and the next step was to establish a typology of grammatical errors[4], set up in accordance with the system in Svartvik, et al (1973). The present report is an attempt to explain some categories of errors in the typology.

My choice is based on frequencies for some categories, e g verb form (Table 1) and determiners (Table 2) and on other grounds for some, e g would and should, which are generally considered difficult for Swedish learners of English.

1.5 NATIVE SPEAKERS' JUDGEMENTS

Since my view on the errors was necessarily limited to that of the teacher responsible for examining future elementary school teachers, it was found to be of great value to know the attitude of native speakers of English to the errors made by Swedes.

A former colleague of mine, who is a teacher of English to Swedes, kindly offered to judge the errors from an English-speaking person's point of view. She also consulted three other native speakers who were staying in Sweden for the summer, namely a school-mistress who teaches English to English children, a retired police-officer, and a house-wife.

The group were presented with a list of the 316 error types which are dealt with in this report, and they were asked to evaluate the errors according to a four-point scale (see section 6). The result is based on joint judgements, and, as will be seen, the four native speakers did not always agree on a grade for each error.

2 COMMENTING ON THE STATISTICAL RESULTS

The typology of errors, the results of which are shown in Table 9 and which constitutes the corpus of this study, is made up of errors belonging to the following grammatical categories, ordered here according to frequencies and with reading and listening comprehension scores conflated:

Categories	Group A	Group B	Total	% of total number of errors
The verb phrase	28	63	91	(24.7%)
The noun phrase	26	43	69	(18.9%)
Prepositions	18	51	69	(18.1%)
Concord	13	61	74	(12.7%)
Pronouns	14	16	30	(9.6%)
Word order	13	27	30	(7.8%)
Clause connection	3	4	7	(3.7%)
Adjectives and adverbs	5	3	8	(3.2%)
Complementation	2	2	4	(1.2%)
Numerals	1	0	1	(0.1%)

(For details see Tables 1 to 9)[5]

Taken separately, the order for the two test types would not be exactly the same, since there are more than three times as many concord errors in reading comprehension as in listening comprehension (Tables 6 and 9) and exactly three times as many clause connection errors in listening comprehension as in reading comprehension (Tables 8 and 9). The result is puzzling; firstly, because of the conflicting tendencies in the two tests, and secondly, due to the unexpected number of concord errors in the reading comprehension test where the students had more time at

their disposal and tended to write shorter summaries than in the listening comprehension test. One possible explanation of the concord errors is, however, the fact that the second summary dealt almost exclusively with one character, the bear called Paddington, and, what may have been even more important, listening immediately preceded written production. That does not explain the differences between the groups, however. Group B produced more pages in both summaries and, what is more interesting, more pages in listening comprehension than in reading comprehension. Nor does it explain the conflicting tendencies in the tests.

Group B scored very much poorer figures in reading comprehension than group A, especially in the heavy error categories, i e verb phrase, concord, prepositions,and noun phrase (Table 9). The result is not the same in listening comprehension, where the figures are more equal, except for concord with a higher figure for group A.

According to Table 1, tense, aspect,and modality, with 133 errors out of a total of 187 in the verb phrase constituted the greatest difficulty, followed by verb form (46), but if tense, aspect,and modality are taken separately, it will be noticed that verb form errors are as frequent as the use of the present for the past. As expected, the correct use of the progressive was a difficult problem, and Table 1 shows more than twice as many errors in progressive [simple] (30) as in simple [progressive] (12). Present for past (40) is more common than past for present (22) in the accounts. The distribution between the groups differs. There are more errors in group B, probably due to the fact that they produced more pages. The use of <u>should</u> (15) has caused many errors, but this time, oddly enough, more errors in group A than in group B. There are strikingly few errors in voice (1) and <u>do</u>-periphrasis (7) (see section 7).

Table 2 reveals an almost equal tendency to use definite and indefinite articles instead of zero (20, 15), but there is also a strong tendency in the opposite direction, namely to leave out the article where it should be used (15, 8). There is great uncertainty in the form of the inflected genitive (45), and another large category is that of number (24), especially singular for plural (22), where group B again made more errors than group A.

The most striking fact shown in Table 3 is that so many students used it instead of he (19). This is because it has been incorrectly employed to refer to Paddington who is the principal character in Bond, A Bear Called Paddington and who should rather be regarded as a person than simply an animal, e g:

> Paddington could speak English and it [he] had a conversation with the Browns

Table 4 displays the distribution of the 24 errors in adjectives and adverbs and shows that the students use adjectives instead of adverbs (11) more often than adverbs instead of adjectives (6).

The distribution of errors between different prepositional phrases will be seen in Table 5 where it is evident that most of the errors were made in prepositional phrase as verb complementation (58) and adjunct (49) while, on the other hand, only 6 errors were made in prepositional phrase as adjective complementation. Here again, group B committed the greater part of the errors.

It appears from Table 6, concord, that singular subject plus plural verb (51) is more common than plural subject plus singular verb (44), but it should be noticed that noun subjects and pronoun subjects behave differently. There are more errors when the subject is a noun, and there are more errors in the plural (34) than in the singular (26).

According to Table 7, word order is one of the great difficulties (59). In that category, the placing of adverbials in a sentence caused most errors.

Table 8, finally, indicates a relatively large number of clause connection errors, especially when it comes to choice of subordinator (16).

As was hinted at in section 1.4, the students were free to avoid certain grammatical difficulties, owing to the type of the tests. This would explain the low figures for some categories, such as complementation and adjectives and adverbs. But other categories, such as articles and prepositions, cannot easily be avoided, and consequently the % figures are partially a reflection of the size of the categories.

3 EXPLAINING VERB PHRASE ERRORS (Table 1)

3.1 VERB FORM

3.1.1 Regular verbs

The irregular verb errors (32) exceeded by far the regular verb errors (14). Clend [cleaned], which looks like a mere orthographic error, is considered a grammatical error owing to the fact that the incorrect spelling gives a different pronunciation from the infinitive form, and consequently it can be assumed that the student has mistaken a regular verb for an irregular verb, thus an instance of overgeneralization. Overgeneralization also occurs in:

(1) o yes I'd lowed [love] to said the happy bear

where the d in I'd is probably intended to be a contracted form of should or would, but as it now stands, it must logically be a contracted form of had.

3.1.2 Irregular verbs

The explanation of the irregular verb errors must apparently be both interlingual and intralingual. The way intralingual interference manifested itself may be classified as follows:

a	regular form for irregular:	but she was just blowed [blown] up
b	wrong choice of principal parts:	Miss Barkley born [bore] a baby but he was dead
c	wrong choice of verb:	a halfeaten bun laid [lay] on the table
d	use of participle form:	the story is taken [taking] /takes/[6] place during the first world war
e	simple tense influence on do-periphrasis:	she didn't thought [think] he had eaten anything
f	3 p sg influence:	Piglet had to has [have] a bath
g	pronunciation influence:	he sad [said]

Some of the b-type errors call for further discussion:

(2) then they begun [began] to talk

(3) they have drank [drunk] too much

These verbs represent a class of irregular verbs which is especially troublesome for Swedish students because of its twofold change of base vowel, and it is probably very confusing that two other verb classes conjugate /i/, /æ/, /æ/, e g sit, sat, sat, and /i/, /ʌ/, /ʌ/, e g dig, dug, dug.

In the following d-type error:

(4) the story in the book is taken [is taking/takes] place during the first world war

the student seems to have employed the passive form before deciding what to write next. The dialectal pronunciation /in/ for /iŋ/ may also help to explain the form taken.

An e-type error like

(5) she didn't thought [think] ...

may be due to influence from the preceding didn't.

Pure interlingual interference seems to be the source of errors only in a couple of cases, namely:

(6) Mrs Brown sow [saw] some words at it

(7) Peter toke [took] the children

where the errors probably reflect the two students' Swedish dialect, Scanian, which abounds in diphthongs that are not used in standard Swedish, e g Scanian /səu/ for standard Swedish /so:/ så 'so'.

3.2 TENSE, ASPECT, AND MODALITY

3.2.1 Progressive [simple]

The simple fact that Swedish does not possess a grammatical feature corresponding to the English progressive aspect is one reason why Swedish students cannot be expected to master it. Another reason could be that the rules in school grammars concerning the progressive aspect may either be not exhaustive enough or difficult to apply. Slettengren-Widén (1967:119) deal with this matter very briefly: "When you describe something that is going on just for the moment, you use a form of be + a verb form ending in ing." Fischerström (1962:113) is more exhaustive: "De progressiva (pågående) tidsformerna begagnas för att beteckna, att en handling eller ett tillstånd pågår i el. till ett visst ögonblick eller under en viss (uppgiven eller underförstådd) tid. De betecknar, att handlingen el. tillståndet är oavslutade." And he adds in the same paragraph: "De allmänna tidsformerna betecknar däremot något avslutat. De uttrycker dessutom upprepning, bruk, vana." It should of course be emphasized that many students never bothered to learn these rules.

After checking one of the most widely used English text + work-books for Grades 7 to 9 it seems to me that the use of the ing-forms is much stressed in comparison with other grammatical items, apparently without having the intended learning effect. It might also be assumed that the progressive aspect, being a typically English feature, is pointed out by the teacher as soon as it appears, and thus given learning priority.

Richards (1974:179) says that "Excessive attention to points of difference at the expense of realistic English is a characteristic of much contrastive-based teaching."

If the students do not master the progressive aspect, "every verb is a potential ing-form for them" according to Edström (1973:129) who adds that other factors may be a wish "to avoid monotony, to make the sentence sound more 'English'" (see also Olsson 1974:55).

The students' lack of proficiency leads both to errors caused by interference from the simple form in the source language and to overgeneralization of functions of the ing-form in the target language. In Edström's investigation, which was based on translations, the number of errors attributable to overgeneralization was rather small (1973:129), whereas in the present material the majority of the progressive [simple] errors are obviously the effect of overgeneralization, maybe due to the character of the tests. The type of overgeneralization is not necessarily the same.

In the following examples the students have employed the progressive aspect, which denotes an action in progress, instead of the simple form to indicate the occurrence of an action.

(8) after that day many young men are escaping [escape] to England

(9) they rushes into each others arms. Christopher Robin is reading [reads] the message

(10) Mr Brown was fetching [fetched] the tea and the cakes

In (8) the time adverbial at the beginning of the sentence indicates that it is not an action in progress. It would not be possible to say e g:*After that day many young men are escaping at the moment to show temporariness or:*After that day many young men are escaping when suddenly the war is over. The ing-form in (9) suggests that while Christopher Robin is reading the letter, they rush into each other's arms, which is the wrong order of events according to the contextual environment. Referring to (10) it would be quite possible to say:

> Mr Brown was fetching the tea and the cakes when he caught sight of Paddington on top of the table

but here again the context is the conclusive factor. Mr Brown's fetching the tea and the cakes belongs to a series of successive actions.

Also in the following examples the progressive aspect indicating an action in progress seems to have lead to the employment of the ing-form instead of simple tense which is normally used in cases of habitual or characteristic activity (Quirk et al 1972:93).

(11) he is drinking [drinks] as much as ever when he is staying in the hospital

(12) Martha and John are not very good friends and they are quarrelling [quarrel] a lot

In (11) drinking means that he did not stop drinking for months, which seems impossible. This example will be further discussed, however, in section 6. Example (12) is an objective statement, probably influenced by an example like Martha and John are always quarrelling, which is emotionally coloured.

In the following examples I would suggest influence from the present progressive employed to indicate future, which is "especially frequent with transitional dynamic verbs like arrive, come, go, land, start, stop, etc, which refer to a transition between two states or positions" (Quirk et al 1972:88):

(13) where do you come from? - I'm coming [I come] from Peru

(14) the family decide to take a taxi and to mix a hot bath for Paddington when they are comming [come] home

(15) but that night when D C was murdered, Goyles was coming [came] to Riddlesdale Lodge

(16) she dies. Mr Henry is going [goes] out in the rain

In (15) for instance, nothing but the context indicates that an error has been committed. Otherwise, the construction would have been perfectly correct to express future viewed from a certain moment in the past (Quirk et al 1972:90). And the same applies to:

(17) one warm sommerday Mr and Mrs Brown were going [went] to Paddington Station to meet their daughter Judy who was coming home from school

Sometimes the occurrence of an action may be expressed in the progressive form, namely when progressive aspect may be considered to add vividness of description (Quirk et al 1972:93). I am referring to examples like:

(18) the railroads are being destroyed [are destroyed]

(19) the British bombers are being helped [are helped] by light

These examples have been counted as errors, however, owing to the contextual objectivity (see section 6).

Two of the verb types merit regard from another point of view, namely have and live in their capacity of being used either statively or dynamically. In:

(20) she is the only child of the headmaster of the college on which George is having [has] his profession

have has been employed as a dynamic verb, and the progressive aspect indicates that George is only temporarily engaged as a teacher and this ought to be hinted at somehow in the context, e g by a time adjunct, like: George is working there for the time being. Have in its

stative capacity, on the other hand, signifies duration, i e that George works at the college for an unlimited time. Similar arguments are applicable to this example:

(21) he is living [lives] in some kind of headquarter

i e if the person did not stay at the place short enough to justify the ing-form which would then signify limited duration. The decisive factor is the book which was accounted for.

Students are mostly aware of the fact that the ing-form of the verb is to be used after a preposition, which may explain an error like:

(22) soon after returning to the front the Germans and Austrians was on an offensive with bitter fights and the Italians drawing [drew] back slowly

where with is rather close and where after returning may have been of additional influence. The progressive aspect indicating simultaneity is of course another possible influence.

Interlingual interference is an alternative, or perhaps additional, explanation of the error in (17) discussed above. Swedish students, especially if they are untrained writers, tend to employ a superfluous 'skulle' in written narratives, like: "Först satte vi oss på tåget och sen skulle vi äta (åt vi)". The Swedish 'skulle' + infinitive is normally rendered in English by a form of be going to + infinitive.

3.2.2 Simple [progressive]

Interlingual interference is obvious in all the examples, if we take into consideration that the simple tense in Swedish corresponds to the progressive aspect in English. All the errors are against the rule saying that the progressive aspect of dynamic verbs is a frequent way of

indicating "'incomplete events in progress'" (Quirk et al 1972:95). One example is:

(23) Mr and Mrs Brown still talked [were still talking] to the driver about the price when Judy and Paddington went up to the house

In addition to Swedish usage, influence from another verb form in the same sentence may be suspected in e g:

(24) they went to the bear which sat [was sitting] on a suitcase

where sat corresponds to the Swedish past tense 'satt' but where went in the first clause may have been an additional error causing factor.

The error in:

(25) Winnie went [was walking] through the wood and was composing a song

cannot be explained in the same way, however, since the second verb phrase is in the progressive.

3.2.3 Present [past]

The frequent and haphazard use of the present tense in summaries narrated mainly in the past tense, 40 errors, indicates above all that the students were so busy thinking of the contents that they forgot the form, a contributory cause being that the time limit may have made it impossible for many of them to reread and correct their summaries.

Linguistically, the errors can be referred both to intralingual interference, which is probably the basic reason for the use of one verb form (present) for another (past), and interlingual interference, apparent e g in the use of the present, possibly influenced by the Swedish historical present, and in the incorrect use of must.

It should be emphasized, however, that students tend to switch unexpectedly from present to past and vice versa also when writing essays in Swedish.

Examples like:

(26) they went back and ask [asked] the bear ...

(27) but Paddington couldn't drink tea in a cup so Mr Brown pour [poured] the tea on to the saucer

(28) as I said they were in love and they talk [talked] about marriage

certainly point to lack of attention as to the form of the verb. A few instances might suggest non-mastery of the principal parts of the verbs, e g:

(29) when they come [came] to the door the bear said ...

(30) they put up at a hotel and they spend [spent] the night together

but since these verbs are so well-known to the students, the explanation is hard to accept, and I am more inclined to believe in the explanation given for (26), (27), and (28) above. The present of spend (30) might of course be the effect of the preceding put in which the forms of present and past coincide.

A very likely assumption is that a vague notion of the Swedish use of so-called "historiskt" or "dramatiskt presens", i e the employment of the present tense to emphasize the most exciting parts of narratives, sports reports, etc, has moved the students to use the present in order to get a similar effect in their English summaries. But owing to the unsystematic switching over from one tense to the other it fails to produce the intended effect.

A couple of examples seem to reflect the English use of the present for "general timeless statements" (Quirk et al 1972:85), e g:

(31) Mrs Brown is [was] a lady with great ideas, so she had a solution

but since this usage is not mentioned in the school grammars of English the interference must be interlingual, an echo of what has been learned in connection with Swedish essay writing. A Swedish sentence like: 'Vi kom till Oakhampton som låg i Devon' would have to be corrected to: ' ... som ligger i Devon', this being a general timeless statement, owing to the fact that Oakhampton is still situated in Devon.

The following errors reflect Swedish usage:

(32) "Peril at End House" is [was] written by Agatha Christie

(33) you have [had] better know our names

(34) he had been there in uniform. They must [had to] escape to Switzerland in a boat

The correct rendering of (32), "Peril at End House" was written by Agatha Christie, exemplifies the rule which says that English mostly uses the past for completed actions belonging to the past, whereas Swedish may have either the present form 'är skriven' or the past form 'har skrivits'.

There is no word-by-word equivalent in Swedish for you had better (33) but the corresponding expression 'det är bäst att' which is in the present tense is most certainly the reason why some students wrote have instead of had.

The fact that Swedish 'måste', the equivalent of must, may be used either in the present or in the past irrespective of the type of speech, explains why students employ must in the past, disregarding the grammatical rule which says that "In the past must is only used in reported speech". "He said we must do it" (Slettengren-Widén 1967:183) and that in direct speech in the past tense must is replaced by a form of have to. The following examples show that the students are well aware of this difference between Swedish and English.

According to the rule, they have employed a form of have to to replace must:

(35) one of the cars got stuck in the mud so they have [had] to leave it there

(36) the taxi-driver didn't like to get cream on his dress. So They have [had] to pay extra

Only, they have not completed their train of thought, happy enough to have remembered the rule saying that must cannot be used.

3.2.4 Past [present]

There are fewer errors in this section, 22, compared with 40 for present [past], and this is a consequence of the fact that the majority of the summaries were written in the past tense. As for present [past] the inconsistency seems to be due mainly to lack of attention, e g:

(37) the soldiers come back and half of them got [get] killed

(38) they arrive all right, and they had [have] a meal in a dugout

(39) he is going there with some other men in cars. But the road was [is] muddy

3.2.5 Would

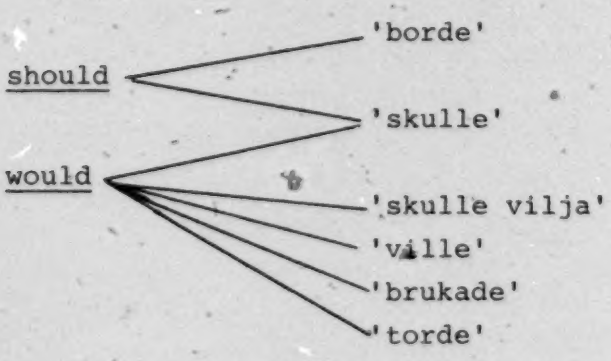


Fig 1[7]

The above figure illustrates that Swedish 'skulle' is the equivalent of both should and would but that should

has the additional meaning of 'borde' and that would has four other meanings. This intricate relationship is bound to cause problems, and the fact that it has to be dealt with in numerous rules and sub-rules in school grammars (Fischerström 1962:126-137, Slettengren-Widén 1967:128, 167-169, 182, 186-193) has a negative effect on most students. They give up instead of trying to understand, learn, and apply the rules. In addition to the lexical and syntactic difficulties there are problems arising from a stereotyped application of the verb paradigm: should, would, would, apparent in the comparatively few (4) would-errors:

(40) ... and asked her husband if they would [should] take care of it

(41) and then they thought they would [ought to] give him a name

(42) but when he would eat [in order to eat] it he went up on the table

(43) but he said that whatever he would order [ordered] the people in the town would fight

In (40) the use of would implies time and not modality, which is required, the corresponding direct question being: What shall we do? and not: *What will we do? Would in (41) also implies time.

In both (42) and (43) there may be interference from Swedish: 'när han skulle äta' and 'vad han än skulle beställa'. Another possible explanation of would in (43) is anticipation in analogy with the following would. The student cannot really be blamed for the error in (43) since it is not stated in the school grammars referred to, that whatever introduces conditional clauses where will and shall (in this case would and should = future in the past) should not be used to express the future.

3.2.6 Should

There are almost four times as many should-errors (15) as would-errors (4) and they point to a strong tendency to employ should for all uses of Swedish 'skulle', e g:

(44) Paddington put his hand on the taxi-drivers shoulder when he should repeat [repeated] the adress

(45) Paddington hoped that Mrs Bird should [would] like him

(46) when the baby should [was to] come they were in Montreux

Some errors have additional causes, e g:

(47) the bear said that he should [would] like it very much

in which should may have been employed in analogy with the usage in direct speech: I should like it very much.

In the following examples should would be possible in order to add strong insistence on the part of the speaker:

(48) she told him that he should [would] get marmelade every morning

(49) they should [would] get marmelade all mornings

whereas the context suggests would, i e non-volitional future (Quirk et al 1972:99; see also Slettengren-Widén 1967:191 and section 6 in this report).

The volitional use of should is reflected again in:

(50) Pooh promised that he should [would] help him

4 EXPLAINING NOUN PHRASE ERRORS

4.1 DETERMINERS

In Dušková's investigation (1969), where the test subjects were Czech postgraduate students, 228 out of 260 article errors were recurrent and 32 nonce

mistakes, i e "unique in character, nonrecurrent and not readily traceable to their sources" (Dušková 1969:15). She classifies the errors into the following groups:

a Omission of the indefinite article (40)

b Omission of the definite article with a singular countable noun (27)

c Omission of the definite article with nouns modified by an *of*-phrase or a participle (phrase) (73)

d Omission of the definite article with names of countries and mountains (13)

e Failure in treatment of nouns used generically: no article with a singular noun (20)

f Use of the definite article with a plural noun (35)

g Use of the definite article instead of the indefinite (15)

According to Dušková (1969:18) the errors could be predicted by contrastive analysis which claims that great differences between languages lead to acute learning problems. In Dušková's report the most frequent errors were omissions of the article, and the result was expected since the Czech language has no articles. In my material, on the other hand (see Table 2), the opposite tendency prevails; 35 out of 70 article errors are instances of article [zero], 23 are omissions. The figures are not directly comparable, however, due to the different types of tests and different classification systems, but it is evident that articles constitute a much greater problem for Czechs (260 out of 774 grammatical errors) than for Swedes (70 out of 757 errors). It is also obvious that interlingual interference is not so predominant in my material.

4.1.1 Definite [zero]

Even though interlingual interference is apparent in examples like:

(51) the Paddington Station [Paddington Station]

where the proper noun consists of a name + common noun, the Swedish equivalent of which would be 'Paddington-stationen' in the definite form, one should keep in mind that the article occurs exceptionally in the same category of proper nouns in English, e g: the Albert Memorial.

"There are a number of count nouns that take the zero article in abstract, or rather specialized use, chiefly in certain idiomatic expressions (with verbs like BE and GO and with prepositions like at, by, etc)" (Quirk et al 1972:156). This rule looks easy to apply, and students are normally familiar with the expressions referred to, so that there are seldom errors like:

(52) after finishing the breakfast [breakfast]

(53) after an interesting trip with the taxi [by taxi]

but when they occur, they are obviously caused by interlingual interference. Not so an error like:

(54) he helps to organize resistance and terror in the silence [silence]

which is not easily explained, perhaps just a slip of the pen.

Both interlingual and intralingual interference can be assumed in:

(55) the darkest Peru [darkest Peru]

The corresponding Swedish expression would either take or not take the article, and influence is also possible from the use in English of the article with superlatives.

The difficult errors are apparently those with generic reference:

(56) the owl is the knowledge [knowledge] in the wood

(57) the first part of the book is about the life [life] in the villa near the front

The school grammars quoted stress the fact that nouns do not take the definite article if they are uncountables and used in a 'general sense'. What is difficult for Swedish learners is to grasp what is meant by 'general sense'[8].

They may accept the 'general sense' (generic reference) in e g: Life is short, art is long, gold is expensive, knowledge is useful, etc, but as soon as the noun is modified by an attributive adjective or a prepositional phrase they get bewildered. This difficulty is pointed out in Quirk et al (1972:153):"English tends to make a liberal interpretation of the concept 'generic' in such cases, so that the zero article is used also where the reference or the noun head is restricted by premodification". In Swedish the definite article would have to be employed in translations of sentences (56) and (57): 'kunskapen i skogen' and 'livet i villan'. Intralingual interference is possible from the use of the definite article with noun + prepositional postmodification by of-phrase: the history of England (Quirk et al 1972:153). Analogous examples might be:

(58) the both [both] of them went to the corner

(59) in the front [front] of them

although another type of intralingual interference is more plausible, namely for (58) influence from expressions like the two of them, the three of them, etc, whereas (59) is probably a hybrid between in front of and in the front.

In the following two errors neither interlingual nor intralingual interference can be noticed:

(60) as they all take delight in the juice of the barley [barley][9]

(61) he knew the marmelade [marmalade] was expensive

The most likely explanation is that the students have misunderstood the rule and employed the definite article for generic reference instead of omitting it.

4.1.2 Definite [others]

There are three instances of definite article instead of possessive pronoun, e g:

(62) Mrs Brown came back with the [her] daughter

which are most certainly caused by influence from the Swedish use of the definite form in a similar case: 'hon kom tillbaka med dottern'.

Definite article for indefinite occurred in only one case:

(63) Mr Brown took him to a buffée to have a cup of tea. They sat down at a table for two in the [a] corner

The choice of article is dependent on an earlier mention of the noun. In this case there was no earlier mention of the corner, but this could be a case of situational reference (Quirk et al 1972:154-156[10], see also section 6).

4.1.3 Indefinite

Dušková (1969) does not mention any cases at all of incorrect use of the indefinite article, only omissions. In my material 15 out of 20 indefinite-errors are indefinite [zero] errors. There are 2 examples of indefinite [definite] and 3 of indefinite [indefinite pronoun].

Indefinite [zero]

One much stressed grammatical rule says that "A, an is used before nouns (substantiv) which express what somebody (something) is, becomes or remains (förblir)". (Slettengren-Widén 1967:10) and consequently

(64) he became a chief [chief] for the ambulances

would be correct if it were not for another rule saying: "Om det däremot är fråga om en som är ensam i sitt slag, står ingen obestämd artikel" (Fischerström 1962:19) and which the students have apparently overlooked. Another possible cause of the errors is "hypercorrection" (Dušková 1969:21) - "learners are so often corrected ... that they occasionally overcompensate in an effort to avoid the pitfall".

(65) the bear would be a lovely company [lovely company] for Jonathan and Judy

shows that company has been treated as a count noun instead of a mass noun.

The unexpected use of the article in:

(66) there is a silence [silence]

is probably due to the use of the indefinite article in front of a premodifying adjective, as in: there was a brief silence and perhaps also to analogy with expressions like: Don't make a noise, I was in a hurry, etc.

What and half + indefinite

It is well known to students that the indefinite article should be placed after what and after half. In fact, many think that what a and half a are inseparable in whatever context they occur, and this is most certainly the cause of the following errors:

(67) the bankman ... wondered what a kind of man [what kind of a man] Mr Wimsey should have been ...

(68) but when he came half a [half] way he felt very hungry

This is a very common error, which would appear from another type of test. The students do not pay attention to the fact that what is followed by a, an in exclamations only, e g: What a nice dress! and not in direct or indirect questions, like: What dress is that? and She asked what dress it was.

They also forget that a, an is not used in front of an uncountable. Consequently half an hour is correct but not *half a time and *half a way (68).

4.1.4 Zero [definite/indefinite]

Quite a few of the 23 errors are undoubtedly due to inattentiveness on the part of the students, errors like:

(69) ... who was coming from her holiday in country [the country]

(70) jam was very [a very] expensive article

The error in (69) may have been made in analogy with in town (see below).

Intralingual interference is apparent in only 2 of the 15 zero [definite] errors, namely:

(71) ... in the direction of Lost Property Office [the Lost Property Office]

with the article omitted probably in analogy with names like Waterloo Bridge and Paddington Station which consist of a proper name + noun denoting bridge, building etc, and:

(72) Coloner Lanser understands that someone in town [the town] must have arranged this

probably influenced by idiomatic expressions like be in town, leave town, which are not equal, however, (72) being an instance of specific reference (Quirk et al 1972:154).

Intralingual interference is not reflected at all in the 8 zero [indefinite] errors.

About half of the omissions of both definite and indefinite articles are apparently caused by interlingual interference, e g:

(73) Brown's [the Browns] asked him if he had enough food

(74) Paddington waved to all people [the people] he saw

(75) the little dirty-brown bear with two lardge [too large a] hat

(76) George is teacher [a teacher] at a college

(73) is of special interest because of the apostrophe added to the plural form of the noun (see section 4.2).

4.2 INFLECTED AND PERIPHRASTIC GENITIVE

45 of the 48 errors refer to the form of the genitive, while there are only two instances of of-construction [s-genitive], one instance of s-genitive [of-construction] and one of zero [of-construction].

The first section of form-errors, apostrophe missing, consists of two different types:

(a) only apostrophe missing: a label round the bears [bear's] neck

(b) apostrophe + s missing: after a long night [night's] rowing

Since only s is the genitive marker in Swedish, it is evident that the errors of type (a) are caused by interference from the source language:

(77) a label around the bears [bear's] neck

(78) the Darlings [Darlings'] house

Both interlingual and intralingual interference may be the cause of errors like:

(79) he keeps the people [people's] anger down

(80) George and Martha meet Nick and Honey at a teatcher [teachers'] party

Equivalents in Swedish are 'folkilskan' and 'lärarfest', i e compound words, consisting of noun premodifier plus noun. English has the same way of creating compound nouns, e g garden party, television screen, etc (Quirk et al 1972:1024-1026).

The following errors, to be referred to type (b) above, are likely to have a phonological basis:

(81) the boss [boss's] wife

with omission of the genitive marker as the effect of the final -s of the unmarked form, whereas the initial s- of the word immediately following the unmarked genitive might have had a similar retroactive effect in:

(82) there were a moment [moment's] silence

Errors like (81) may also be influenced by Swedish unmarked genitive forms like: 'Jens bok', 'en tös docka' etc.

(83) after a long night [night's] rowing

which is similar to (82), suggests another explanation, probably confusion with a long night of rowing.

As was seen in the preceding section (4.1.4), many students tend to insert the apostrophe with the plural-s, and the same tendency appears in:

(84) the bear should live with the Brown's [Browns]

(85) two steaming cup's [cups] of tea

The reason for errors of this type must be overgeneralization from the s-genitive:

The 2 cases of of-construction [s-genitive]:

(86) the widow of Alex [Alex's widow] kills a lieutenant

(87) the staff of Colonel Lanser [Colonel Lanser's staff]

were corrected in accordance with the rule in school grammars which says that the s-genitive is nearly always used with persons and proper names in the singular (Fischerström 1962:24 and Slettengren-Widén 1967:45). The same general rule is found in Quirk et al (1972:198) but with the addition that "the of-genitive is also possible in most cases". Of special interest is the following quotation (Quirk et al 1972:201): "There is considerable overlap in the uses of the two genitives. Although either may be possible in a given context, one of them is, however, generally preferred by native speakers for reasons of euphony, rhythm, emphasis, or implied relationship between the nouns". What has been corrected as errors may consequently be correct in certain contexts, and the students who employed the of-genitive may have felt that, in these cases, the rule they had learned could not be applied (see section 6).

5 EXPLAINING CONCORD ERRORS

Quirk et al (1972:359) define concord as: "the relationship between two grammatical elements such that if one of them contains a particular feature (eg plurality) then the other also has to have that feature". Since it must be assumed that the students are very well aware of the subject-verb concord, a considerable number of the concord-errors (96) will be due to lack of attention, i e they need not have occurred at all, they are mistakes in performance, e g errors like:

he ask [asks]
she have [has]
the Mayor are [is] waiting

Martha and Nick comes [come]
the Germans was [were]
they arrives [arrive]

Dušková (1969:20) says, referring to Czech learners of English, that "omission of the -s in the third person singular may be accounted for by the heavy pressure of all the other endingless forms". This certainly applies to Swedish learners as well, although the primary cause of their errors will be the Swedish verb system without personal endings. Such errors which consist of a final -s added to the third person plural of a present verb form Dušková (1969:21) ascribes to "overgeneralization of the third person singular ending for the third person plural", an error type of which there are as many as 44 instances in the present material. As was mentioned in section 2 (cf Table 6), the final -s was much more frequent with noun subjects, i e subjects ending in -s, than with pronoun subjects, and this leads to the assumption that the verb-ending has been added due to the influence of the preceding noun-ending, a so-called perseveration error, apparent in:

(88) even his sidewhiskers is [are] full of jam
(89) the night it happened the parents was [were] autdoors

In addition to what has been said above, errors which belong to the following categories merit further comment:

(a) 3 p singular subject + don't
(b) Singular subject + verb ending in /s/ or /z/
(c) Singular subject + were
(d) Collective noun + singular verb
(e) Subject ending in -men + singular verb
(f) Coordinated subject + singular verb
(g) There + singular verb + plural notional subject

(a) 3 p singular subject + don't

(90) she don't [doesn't] like it but don't [doesn't] say anything

(91) Mrs Walker don't [doesn't] like him

Since the form don't for the third person singular is very often heard in careless speech - especially in American English - in films, TV-programmes, song texts, etc, it is only to be expected in learners' production.

(b) Singular subject + verb ending in /s/ or /z/:

(92) if Roo notice [notices] a danger he creeps and jumps

The fact that both creep and jump have the third person ending added is an indication that notice is accepted as third person singular simply because it already ends in an s-sound.

(c) Singular subject + were:

(93) one of them were [was] shot

(94) the station were [was] crowded with people

(95) there were [was] no one who could protect the town

These sentences reflect first of all inadequate mastery of the past forms of BE, which is much more common than one would expect, the tendency to use were with a singular subject being however less pronounced than vice versa, due to overgeneralization of the form was. The use of were may also have been influenced by the Swedish past form 'var', which is much more like were than was. In addition, (93) reflects the principle of 'proximity' which "denotes agreement of the verb with whatever noun or pronoun closely precedes it ..." (Quirk et al 1972:360). In this case them has caused the student to use the plural form of the verb. Although English speakers tend to behave the same way, were in (93) was considered wrong

but comprehensible by the native speakers who took part in this investigation (for scale of error evaluation see section 6). In example (94) one may trace an anticipated plural form in accordance with the following people.

(d) Collective noun + singular verb:

(96) the young couple is [go] to Martha and George in a after-party

(97) the war was over and the enemy wants [wanted] cool from the mine

The difficulty lies in deciding whether the collective should be thought of as a whole or as consisting of different members. Some guidance is given in the school grammars, but there are ambiguous examples: The whole crew were/was saved and All the family were/was in the country (Fischerström 1962:37). The following piece of advice is given in Quirk et al (1972:361): "It is generally safest for a foreign learner, when in doubt, to obey 'grammatical concord'". (By grammatical concord is meant singular subject + singular verb and plural subject + plural verb.)

(e) Subject ending in -men + singular verb:

(98) The Englishmen starts [start] to send dynamite by air

-men in Englishmen is pronounced like the singular form -man in Englishman, namely /mən/, and consequently the cause of the error might be phonological.

(f) Coordinated subject + singular verb:

(99) Martha and Nick comes [come]

(100) he and Captain Hastings is [are] staying at the Majestic Hotel

(101) both young and old walks [walk] out

(102) the polis and postman was [were] several miles away

These are all examples of non-appositional coordination, i e "cases that can be treated as an implied reduction of two clauses." (Quirk et al 1972:361). Martha and Nick come = Martha comes and Nick comes, although sentence (102) has the appearance of appositional coordination, where "the coordinated structures refer to the same thing". This is not true, however, the policeman and the postman being two different persons. The student's way of writing polis and postman as if the nouns designated one and the same person may have caused the incorrect verb form. In sentences (99) and (100) the principle of proximity is met with again. The nearest noun decides the form of the verb which seems to be the case even in (101) where, however, an additional error-causing factor may be that the coordinated subject consists of adjectives used as nouns.

(g) There + singular verb + plural notional subject:

(103) there comes [come] complications

The student who wrote this sentence might not necessarily write *there is complications instead of there are complications, since the agreement in number between verb and notional subject is very much emphasized both in English text books and school grammars, e g Slettengren-Widén (1967:74): "There is (was, etc.)... is used about one person or thing. There are (were, etc.)... is used about more than one person or thing." Besides, the use of come is unexpected in this type of sentences; it is not mentioned in the school grammars referred to, and verbs other than be are less common and more literary in existential sentences according to Quirk et al (1972:960).

6 NATIVE SPEAKERS' JUDGEMENTS

The 316 error types which have been dealt with in the preceding chapters were evaluated by native speakers of English who employed a four-point scale. The scale and the result of the evaluation appears from the following table:

Scale	Number of error types
0 = "uncertain"	6
1 = "acceptable in colloquial and careless language"	32
2 = "wrong but comprehensible"	251
3 = "wrong and incomprehensible"	27
Total =	316

The evaluators were given the sentences with the error underlined but without my corrections. They did not have access to the full context.

2 ("wrong but comprehensible") was by far the most usual point given, and very few sentences were found that were 3 ("wrong and incomprehensible"). 0 ("uncertain") was very rarely awarded, but 1 ("acceptable in colloquial and careless language") seemed best in quite a few sentences. The evaluators decided to award 1 in cases where they might have said exactly the same themselves in everyday speech or if they were used to hearing it.

In the following four cases the evaluators differed in opinion though they finally agreed:

(A) he flew to the real country

(B) "Peril at End House" is written by Agatha Christie

(C) the bear had a sort of label around his neck with a text that runs

(D) Paddington can't drink out of a cup so they had to pour the tea on to a saucer

According to two of the evaluators (A) could mean either: Did he go by aeroplane? or: Did he grow wings? or: Did he escape?, whereas the other two felt that the word flew was commonly used in this connection. They remarked that a great many people would find it quite natural to say:

> The English army was fast approaching when Bonnie Prince Charlie flew to the Isle of Skye.

For (B) the evaluators hesitated between 1 and 2. Their first reaction was to write 2, but on second thought they wrote 1, saying that it would be quite natural for a TV announcer to introduce a song by: The lyric of this next song is (written) by Russ Conway.

Referring to sentence (C) the evaluators hesitated between 1 and 2, and eventually found 2 more likely. They felt the lack of the context but could think of situations where the present tense would be perfectly right, "if, for example, the label has been kept and is being held by the writer at the moment or looked at". This was not the case, as appears from the context, however.

Regarding sentence (D) the first reaction of the evaluators was 2. But they changed their minds and two of them felt that the sentence was not wrong on the following grounds: "He can't drink out of a cup - not now and not then - but if you were referring to a specific incident in the past it would be quite normal to use the past tense while at the same time indicating that the condition was a normal one by referring to that in the present tense".

0 ("hesitation") was for instance awarded for the following cases of present progressive [simple present]:

(E) the railroads are being destroyed

(F) he is drinking as much as ever when he is staying in the hospital

(G) the British bombers are being helped by light

on the following grounds: (A) ing-forms are used much more frequently than is permitted in the grammar; (B) the progressive form makes for instance sports reports more vivid and dramatic. Two error types classified as article errors were also given 0:

(H) Mr Brown took him to a buffée to have a cup of tea. They sat down at a table for two in the corner

where the evaluators found that the definite article instead of the indefinite would not be noticed in writing or speech, and:

(I) Mrs Brown came back with the daughter

where the definite article instead of possessive pronoun "would be correct if you go by the way people talk". People say e g: Come and meet the wife and Mr Brown went to look for the son, meaning my wife and his son, etc.

1 ("acceptable in colloquial or careless language") was awarded for errors like:

(J) he is living in some kind of headquarter
(K) they went to the bear which sat on a suitcase
(L) the bear said that he should like it very much
(M) in the front of them
(N) the widow of Alex kills a lieutenant (see section 4.2)

2 ("wrong but comprehensible") was awarded for errors like:

(O) then they begun to talk
(P) Henry was being delayed by the ambulance
(Q) they went back and ask the bear
(R) how did you managed that
(S) the Switzerland

The 28 error types awarded 3 ("wrong and incomprehensible") are different in nature and may be divided into the following categories:

(i) Understanding obscured by lack of context:

but she was just blowed up

he sad

Peter toke the children

(ii) Context obscures understanding:

Mr Henry and his wife were standing on Paddington Station. They were comming for holding up their daughter, Judy.

he just resists to tell his layers what he was doing

(iii) Context is insignificant:

yes I'd lowed to said the happy bear

Do you got a passport

but when he came half a way he felt hungry

the polis and postman was several miles away

A comparison between errors awarded 1 and errors awarded 2 is interesting:

PROGRESSIVE [SIMPLE]

I Types of errors awarded 1:	II Types of errors awarded 2:
a Martha and John are not very good friends and they are quarrelling a lot	where do you come from? - I'm coming from Peru
b when they came home he met Mrs Bird who was looking after them	Mr Brown was fetching the tea and the cakes
c the people in the town are forced to work in a coal-mine, While they are working they are guarded by soldiers	... she dies. Mr Henry is going out in the rain

A comparison of the above examples makes it clear that ing-forms denoting new events are looked upon as errors by native speakers whereas ing-forms denoting repetion, habit, and custom are regarded as acceptable in colloquial or careless language, but there is apparently hesitation when something is not going on just for the moment (see examples Ib and IIb).

SIMPLE [PROGRESSIVE]

I Types of errors awarded 1:	II Types of errors awarded 2:
a They went to the bear which sat on a suitcase	Winnie went through the wood and was composing a song
b while Mrs Brown waited for Judy to get off the train Mr Brown went	suddenly when the Brown's stood on the platform Mr Brown saw a little bear
c Judy asked Paddington to tell something about South America when they waited for a taxi	but in the end when they all four again sits in the room it seems as though George and Martha together quarell at the other couple

The hesitation regarding actions in progress is still more pronounced in the above examples. In IIc it is quite possible that the 3 p sg form of sit has affected the judgement.

The would and should errors have been awarded more 1's (9) than 2's (7).

I Types of errors awarded 1:	II Types of errors awarded 2:
WOULD	
a ... and asked her husband if they would take care of it	but when they would eat it went up on the table
b and then they thought they would give him a name	but he said that whatever he would order the people in the town would fight
SHOULD	
a Pooh promised that he should help him	Paddington hoped that Mrs Bird should like him
b he told them that it should be even more expensive	when the baby should come they were in Montreux
c she told him that he should get marmalade every morning	Paddington looked with one eye out of the window and with one eye on the family he should stay with

In Ia the evaluators said that should adds emphasis, in Ib should might be replaced by ought to, and in Ic should would be marked in an essay but otherwise not noticed.

Another interesting section from the point of view of evaluation is INFLECTED AND PERIPHRASTIC GENITIVE, where 10 out of 29 error types were awarded 3 ("wrong and incomprehensible").

I Types of errors awarded 3:	II Types of errors awarded 2
a the boss wife	the Dukes sister
b they have been at a party by[11] Martha's father	M-s father
c there were a moment silence	after a long night rowing
d Brown's asked him	the bear should live with the Brown's

(1 was decided on for the widow of Alex kills a lieutenant, p 36)

It might have been preferable if all the errors apart from the one under consideration had been eliminated from the examples. Another error in the same sentence may have caused the native speaker to regard the error as more serious. This is evident if one compares Ic and IIc. *there was a moment silence would probably have been awarded a 2. The evaluators emphasized that apostrophe errors are unique in that they can only be written errors. The errors would not be noticed if spoken. They added that even English people omit the apostrophe and that some are uncertain where to put it.

The group concluded by saying that some errors would be tolerated when spoken but not written. The most irritating among the written errors are the verb errors, especially those consisting of the omission of the third person singular -s and errors in the tense forms of common verbs. Article errors are bad if they lead to confusion, as in: ? I hit the head (whose head?) and

they will be noticed at once. The evaluators terminated by saying that inflected for periphrastic genitive and, vice versa will hardly be noticed at all.

7 CONCLUSIONS

In this analysis no distinction has been made between errors of competence and errors of performance. It must be emphasized, however, that the students' grammatical competence is most certainly above the level revealed by the tests, i e a certain number of the errors are errors of performance, and that their real grammatical competence can only be discovered by elicitation procedures where the students would be forced to judge if a form is grammatically acceptable or not.

Table 10 shows that the majority or the errors were committed in the areas of verb phrase, noun phrase, prepositions, and concord. The most common verb phrase errors (Table 1) were connected with form, tense, and aspect. Errors in do-periphrasis were few, probably owing to the character of the tests (free reproduction). So were voice errors, which, as it appears, could be almost completely avoided. Half of the noun phrase errors (Table 2) were article errors, and the distribution was almost equal between definite, indefinite, and zero. Inflected and periphrastic genitive errors made up one third of the noun phrase errors, and 24 of the 143 errors were errors of number. In prepositions, a little less than half of the errors were committed in prepositional phrase as verb complementation, e g:

he turned at [to] Mr Brown

whereas only 6 of 137 prepositional errors were made in prepositional phrase as adjective complementation, e g:

they are not very kind towards [to] their guests either

Singular subject plus plural verb made up most of the concord errors (Table 6) but with one important restriction. If the subcategories are taken separately, it appears that the most troublesome category was 7.1.8 Noun/plur-verb/sing [plur], e g:

the Germans was [were] afraid

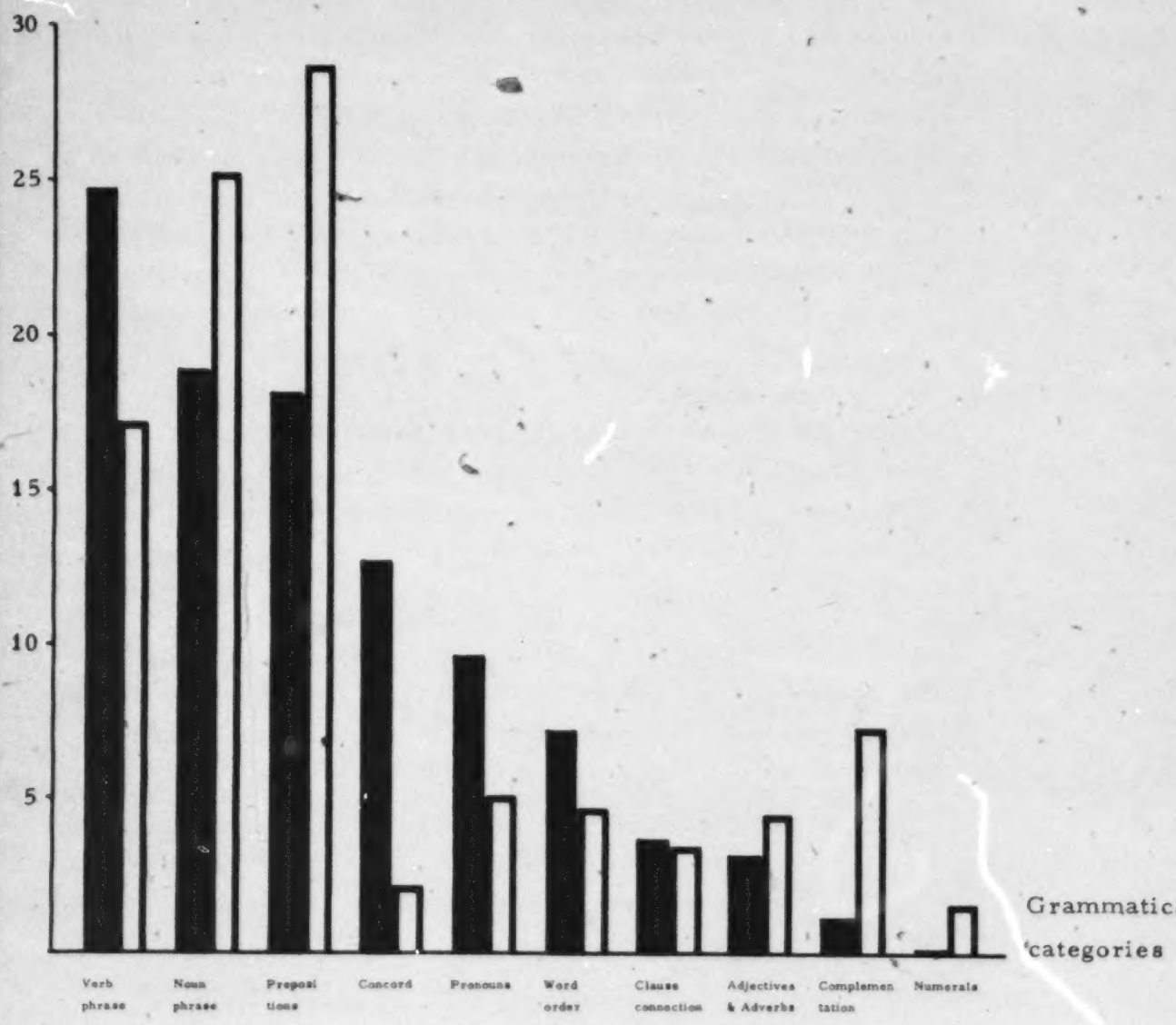
The total results of groups A and B, displayed in Table 9, reveal that the grammatical proficiency of group A (314 errors) was better than that of group B (443 errors). But the results are ambiguous, considering that group A obtained lower scores only in reading comprehension, where they generally wrote shorter accounts than group B. The listening comprehension accounts, on the other hand, were much longer in group B, although the scores are almost equal for the groups (see Table 9). One assumption is that group B were more used to spoken English than group A and consequently wrote better reproductions (see section 1.2 for test subjects).

A comparison between the error frequencies in this analysis and those obtained in Svartvik et al (1973) can be seen in Figure 2.

Owing to the different character of the tests (the teacher trainees wrote summaries and the university students translations) a direct comparison is not possible, but it is obvious from the diagram what the main difficulties are for the two categories of students. Generally, the teacher trainees made more elementary errors than the university students. To a certain extent the differences are superficial, however, due to the character of the tests.

A survey of the errors in Svartvik et al (1973) indicates that 66.8% of the noun phrase errors were errors in determiners, and that 48.7% of those were zero article errors. In my analysis, on the other hand, definite, indefinite, and zero had almost equal figures (see above).

Figure 2.


% of total number of errors
30
25
20
15
10
5
Verb phrase
Noun phrase
Prepositions
Concord
Pronouns
Word order
Clause connection
Adjectives & Adverbs
Complementation
Numerals
Grammatical categories
Teacher trainees
University students

Only 9.2% were errors in number; in my analysis 16.8%. 64.7% of the errors in inflected and periphrastic genitive were form errors, compared with 93.8% in my analysis.

For the university students the majority of the verb phrase errors consisted of errors in tense, aspect, and modality, 88.9%, and only 9.0% were form errors. In my material 24.6% of the errors were form errors and 71.1% were errors in tense, aspect, and modality. My students made 7 do-periphrasis errors (3.7%), the university students 3 (1.5%). In both investigations there were less would than should errors.

In the third large error group, prepositions, the university students committed most of the errors in prepositional phrase as adjunct, 37.4%, the teacher trainees in prepositional phrase as verb complementation, 42.3%.

The main task of this study was to explain certain error types, but since various processes may have been going on at the same time (see p 2), it has been difficult to be completely sure of the origin of the errors. Consequently, an error like:

(3) they have drank [drunk] too much

which is regarded as an error caused by intralingual interference, can either be influenced by the past tense of drink or have a phonological reason, namely confusion of /ʌ/ and /æ/.

(54) he helps to organize resistance and terror in the silence [silence]

might either be caused by intralingual interference or just be a slip of the pen.

Both interlingual and intralingual interference will be reflected in:

(55) the darkest Peru [darkest Peru]

Obvious cases of errors caused by interlingual interference are found in the following categories:

Simple [progressive]:

(23) Mr and Mrs Brown still talked [were still talking] to the driver about the price when Judy and Paddington went up to the house

Apostrophe missing:

(77) a label around the bears [bear's] neck

Concord:

the Mayor are [is] waiting

Zero indefinite :

(76) George is teacher [a teacher] at a college

Errors obviously caused by intralingual interference are found in the following categories:

Progressive [simple]:

(16) she dies. Mr Henry is going [goes] out in the rain

Apostrophe [zero]:

(85) two steaming cup's [cups] of tea

Concord:

(99) Martha and Nick comes [come]

Indefinite [zero]:

(64) he became a chief [chief] for the ambulances

A rough estimation of the origin of the errors investigated, with additional causes excluded, indicates that about 55% were caused by intralingual interference, whereas only about 20% were caused by interlingual interference. The origin of the remaining errors, among which I include the majority of the errors in tense, is more uncertain.

The native speakers who evaluated the 316 error types found that 251 errors were wrong but comprehensible, that 32 could be accepted in colloquial or careless language, that 27 were incomprehensible, and they were uncertain if forms were acceptable or not in 6 cases (see p 34). In a few cases they could not reach full agreement (see pp 34-35). The fact that they did not have access to the complete context seems to have affected their judgements in some cases. Their attitude to errors in tense, aspect, and modality is of special interest (p 38) and certainly shows that foreigners cannot be espected to master att the nuances. The native speakers found that written errors were more irritating than spoken ones and that among the written errors elementary verb errors were more irritating than spoken ones and that among the written errors elementary verb errors were more irritating than others, followed by those other errors which might lead to confusion, e g:

(6) Mrs Brown sow some words at it

(54) he helps to organize resistance and terror in the silence

This analysis shows that the teacher trainees did not master basic English grammar, since the large majority of errors were committed in the basic categories, namely verb phrase (where form, tense and aspect errors dominated), noun phrase (where article and apostrophe genitive errors dominated), prepositions and concord. Also word order errors were fairly numerous. (For pronoun errors see section 2.)

It may be argued that all uses of articles do not belong to basic grammar, that concord rules are not always clear (see section 5) and that learners of English cannot be expected to master the use of prepositions.

Still, the native speakers' reactions (see p 39) indicate that verb, article and concord errors cannot be tolerated (the native speakers did not evaluate preposition and word order errors) and that remedies must be set in to improve the learners' grammatical proficiency in these areas first of all. The use of the progressive form and the use of should and would, on the other hand, need not be emphasized as much as they generally are in grammars and text books.

The fact that more than half or the errors in this analysis were probably due to intralingual interference (see p 44) suggests that the teaching of English grammar should be more concentrated on contrasts within the English language than on contrasts between English and Swedish.

TABLE 1 THE VERB PHRASE

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group B
1 THE VERB PHRASE	187	(24.7%)	73	114
1.1 VERB FORM	46	(6.1%)	18	28
Regular verbs	14		6	8
Irregular verbs	32		12	20
1.2 VOICE	1	(0.1%)	1	0
1.3 TENSE, ASPECT, AND MODALITY	133	(17.6%)	51	82
1.3.1 Progressive [simple]	30		7	23
Present progressive [simple present]	19		3	16
Past progressive [simple past]	8		3	5
Past progressive [simple present]	1		0	1
Past progressive [past perfect]	1		0	1
Past perfect progressive [past perfect]	1		1	0
1.3.2 Simple [progressive]	12		5	7
Simple present [present progressive]	1		0	1
Simple past [past progressive]	11		5	6
1.3.3 Present	41		17	24
Present [past]	40		17	23
Present [future]	1		0	1
1.3.4 Past	23		6	17
Past [present]	22		5	17
Past [past perfect]	1		1	0
1.3.5 Present perfect	2		2	0
Present perfect [past perfect]	2		2	0
will	1		0	1
would	4		2	2
should	15		11	4
must	2		1	1
could	2		0	2
zero	1		0	1
1.4 DO-PERIPHRASIS	7	(0.9%)	3	4

TABLE 2 THE NOUN PHRASE

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group B
2 THE NOUN PHRASE	143	(18.9%)	63	80
2.1 DETERMINERS	70	(9.2%)	33	37
2.1.1 Article form	2		0	2
2.1.2 Definite	24		14	10
Definite [zero]	20		11	9
(a) Proper nouns	6		3	3
(b) Generic reference	4		2	2
(c) Others	10		6	4
Definite [indefinite]	1		1	0
Definite [possessive]	3		2	1
2.1.3 Indefinite	20		7	13
Indefinite [zero]	15		5	10
Indefinite [definite]	2		2	0
Indefinite [indefinite pronoun]	3		0	3
2.1.4 Zero	23		11	12
Zero [definite]	15		10	5
(a) Proper nouns	6		5	1
(c) Specific reference	9		5	4
Zero [indefinite]	8		1	7
2.1.5 Noun [adjective]	1		1	0
2.2 NUMBER	24	(3.2%)	6	18
2.2.2 Plural [singular]	2		0	2
2.2.3 Singular [plural]	22		6	16
2.3 INFLECTED AND PERIPHRASTIC GENITIVE	49	(6.5%)	24	25
2.3.1 Form	45		24	21
(a) Apostrophe missing	31		15	16
(b) Apostrophe misplaced	2		2	0
(c) Apostrophe [zero]	12		7	5
2.3.2 Of-construction [s-genitive]	2		0	2
2.3.3 s-genitive [of-construction]	1		0	1
2.3.4 Zero [of-construction]	1		0	1

TABLE 3 PRONOUNS

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group
3 PRONOUNS	73	(9.6%)	39	34
3.1 It	28	(3.7%)	16	12
3.1.1 It [there, this, so, Ø]	8		3	5
3.1.2 It [he]	19		13	6
3.1.3 Ø [it]	1		0	1
3.2 There	5	(0.7%)	3	2
3.2.1 Ø [there]	5		3	2
3.3 Demonstrative	8	(1.1%)	4	4
3.3.1 That [the, so]	3		2	1
3.3.2 This [that]	2		1	1
3.3.3 Those [who]	1		1	0
3.3.4 Ø [so]	1		0	1
3.3.5 So [to]	1		0	1
3.4 Indefinite	10	(1.3%)	2	8
3.5 Reflexive	1	(0.1%)	1	0
3.6 Relative	9	(1.2%)	5	4
3.7 Possessive	11	(1.4%)	8	3
3.8 Object [subject] form	1	(0.1%)	0	1

TABLE 4 ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group B
5 ADJECTIVES AND ADVERBS	24	(3.2%)	9	15
5.1 ADVERB [ADJECTIVE]	6	(0.8%)	3	3
(a) As premodifier	1		0	1
(b) As head	1		1	0
(c) Predicative and correlative constructions	3		1	2
(d) Postmodifier [adjective]	1		1	0
5.2 ADJECTIVE [ADVERB]	11	(1.4%)	5	6
(b) As verb modifier	8		3	5
(c) As adverb modifier	2		2	0
(d) Form	1		0	1
5.3 COMPARISON	2	(0.3%)	0	2
(a) Periphrastic [inflected] comparison	1		0	1
(b) Irregular comparison	1		0	1
5.4 ZERO [ADVERB]	2	(0.3%)	0	2
5.5 CHOICE OF ADVERB	1	(0.1%)	0	1
5.6 ADJECTIVE [NOUN]	2	(0.3%)	1	1

TABLE 5 PREPOSITIONS

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group B
6 PREPOSITIONS	137	(18.1%)	53	84
6.1 PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE AS ADJUNCT	49	(6.4%)	16	33
at	5		2	3
by	4		0	4
during	1		0	1
for	1		0	1
in	12		4	8
of	1		0	1
on	19		6	13
on to	1		0	1
under	2		1	1
with	2		2	0
Ø	1		1	0
6.2 PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE AS POST-MODIFIER IN A NOUN PHRASE	24	(3.2%)	13	11
at	2		1	1
because of	1		0	1
by	1		0	1
for	2		0	2
from	1		0	1
in	4		3	1
of	2		1	1
on	3		0	3
to	5		5	0
with	3		3	0
6.3 PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE AS VERB COMPLEMENTATION	58	(7.7%)	23	35
against	1		1	0
at	6		2	4
between	1		0	1
by	4		0	4
for	4		1	3
from	2		1	1
in	10		4	6
into	2		1	1
of	4		2	2
on	7		3	4
out	1		1	0
to	3		1	2
up	2		1	1
with	5		2	3
Ø	6		3	3
6.4 PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE AS ADJECTIVE COMPLEMENTATION	6	(0.8%)	1	5
about	1		0	1
against	2		0	2
by	1		1	0
towards	1		0	1
with	1		0	1

TABLE 6 CONCORD

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group B
7 CONCORD	96	(12.7%)	29	67
7.1 Subject-verb	95	(12.6%)	29	66
7.1.1 Pronoun/sing-verb/plur [sing]	22		8	14
7.1.3 Noun/sing-verb/plur [sing]	26		8	18
7.1.4 Noun/plur + postmodification rel- pronoun - verb/sing [plur]	2		0	2
7.1.5 There + verb/sing [plur]-noun/plur	1		0	1
7.1.7 Pronoun/plur-verb/sing [plur]	7		1	6
7.1.8 Noun/plur-verb/sing [plur]	34		12	22
7.1.9 There + verb/plur [sing]-noun/pronoun/sing	3		0	3
7.2 Noun-pronoun	1	(0.1%)	0	1
7.2.1 Noun/plur-pronoun/sing [plur]	1		0	1

TABLE 7 WORD ORDER

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group B
9 WORD ORDER	59	(7.8%)	30	29
9.1 Subject-verb relation	11	(1.5%)	5	6
9.2 Subject-verb-(prepositional) object relation	3	(0.4%)	2	1
9.3 Verb-object relation	3	(0.4%)	3	0
9.4 Adverbs and adverbials	39	(5.1%)	20	19
9.5 Ordering of complements	2	(0.3%)	0	2
9.6 Order of verbs	1	(0.1%)	0	1

TABLE 8 CLAUSE CONNECTION

	Total	% of total number of errors	Group A	Group B
10 CLAUSE CONNECTION	28	(3.7%)	13	15
10.1 Choice of subordinator	16	(2.2%)	7	9
10.2 Choice of clause construction	1	(0.1%)	1	0
10.2.2 Finite verb clause [prep + ing-form]	1		1	0
10.3 Choice of co-ordinator	1	(0.1%)	1	0
10.4 If-clause [not + to + infinitive]	1	(0.1%)	0	1
10.5 Punctuation	7	(0.9%)	4	3
10.6 Zero [subordinator]	2	(0.3%)	0	2

TABLE 9 ALL ERROR TYPES

	READING COMPREHENSION			LISTENING COMPREHENSIO		
	Total	Group A	Group B	Total	Group A	Group B
1 The verb phrase	91	28	63	96	45	51
2 The noun phrase	69	26	43	74	37	37
3 Pronouns	30	14	16	43	25	18
4 Numerals	1	1				
5 Adjectives and adverbs	8	5	3	16	4	12
6 Prepositions	69	18	51	68	35	33
7 Concord	74	13	61	22	16	6
8 Complementation	4	2	2	5	2	3
9 Word order	30	13	17	29	17	12
10 Clause connection	7	3	4	21	10	11
	383	123	260	374	191	183
% of total number of errors		(16.3%)	(34.3%)		(25.2%)	(24.2%)
Number of errors per student		5.6	13		8.7	9.1

[1] The classification is based on errors, which are underlined in the examples, whereas the correct versions are written in square brackets.

[2] The English equivalents of the Swedish school terms are taken from Skolöverstyrelsens Skoltermer på engelska (1970).

[3] The supplementary studies consisted of a one-year course organized by the County Board of Education, and the aim of the course was to make the students equal to those who left the 9-year comprehensive school.

[4] All empty categories have been left out, e g Table 7, 7.1.2, and new categories have been added, e g Table 1, 1.3.1 Past progressive [past perfect] which occurs only in my material.

[5] There is no table for Numerals (with only 1 error, which constitutes 0.1% of the total number of errors), and no table for Complementation (1.2%).

[6] Slants enclose the best alternative in the example.

[7] The Swedish equivalents of should and would are in accordance with Kärre, K et al (1948:759, 986).

[8] In school grammars of English 'general sense' is normally rendered by 'allmän betydelse', e g Fischerström (1962:13). The term in Slettengren-Widén (1967:24-25) is 'allmängiltig betydelse'. Neither term is good, however, since students do not understand its significance.

[9] It has been suggested that the use of the definite article should be influenced by a pop song where the same expression, the juice of the barley, is found.

[10] The use of the definite article for situational reference seems to be more common than is suggested by Quirk, et al (1972:154-156).

[11] By for at is a very common mistake and is probably influenced by German bei, which is also equivalent to Swedish 'hos'.

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